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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

Conference on Regional Stability in South Asia: Establishing a Dialogue on the Future of Afghanistan, March 6-7, 2002

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Enhancing Regional Stability in South Asia

The recent assassination of two of Hamid Karzai's senior Ministers and the more recent attempt on his own life are only the latest in a series of dramatic events that have recently taken place in Afghanistan. Since the September 11 attacks on the United States, the Taliban regime has crumbled, the al Qaeda terrorist network has been dislodged from its principal base and is on the run, and the international community has become engaged in the economic, political, and social reconstruction and development of the country.

The mixed character of these events signifies that the prospects for achieving stability in Afghanistan are uncertain. It is clearly in our interest to think through the post-conflict requirements of Afghan reconstruction as they relate to the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular, and of South Asia more generally. Failure to do so could ultimately result in a return to the conditions of lawlessness and extremism that led to the disintegration of Afghan society in the first instance. Such consequences could also undermine support for future operations in the global war on terrorism.

On March 6 and 7, 2002, the Institute for Defense Analyses and the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy conducted a conference on regional stability in South Asia, with a special focus on Afghanistan. A number of important perspectives, which are provided in this report, emerged from the rich dialogue that took place between U.S. and South Asian policy advisors and practitioners. Our intent is to continue this dialogue.

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Preface

This document presents a report of the "Conference on Regional Stability in South Asia: Establishing a Dialogue on the Future of Afghanistan," held at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) on March 6 and 7, 2002. The conference was co-sponsored by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) and IDA, and was funded through IDA's Central Research Program. The conference brought together analysts and experts from South Asia and the United States to establish cross-cultural communication on a range of important issues, with a particular emphasis on the reconstruction of post-conflict Afghanistan. At the same time, the participants assessed the usefulness of such facilitated discussions as a mechanism for promoting effective cross-cultural dialogue leading to improved understanding between the United States and the Muslim world.

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Executive Summary

On March 6 and 7, 2002, the Institute for Defense Analyses and the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy conducted a conference on regional stability in South Asia, with special emphasis on post-conflict Afghanistan. A number of helpful perspectives emerged thanks to a rich and fruitful dialogue between U.S. and South Asian policy advisors and practitioners. Among the latter were participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir; while the former included representatives from DoD, the Joint Staff, the State Department, AID, and the World Bank. Among the perspectives offered by non-US participants were:

Afghanistan: National Considerations

▶ The success of future political and economic developments depends heavily on taking traditional religious and cultural considerations into account.

▶ A successful future government will have to balance central control with local autonomy that accommodates the multiple sources of identity, whether ethnic, religious, or cultural.

    ❑ A consultative government model along the lines of the *Loya Jirga* holds the greatest promise for success because it provides a forum for airing differences and identifying shared perspectives and needs.

    ❑ Early establishment of effective national institutions such as the police, the military, a professional bureaucracy, and national civics courses in schools will help rebuild a sense of shared identity and national pride.

▶ To a significant degree, future diplomatic, social, economic, and educational reforms will require consultation with and the support of the *Ulama* Council, senior clerics and religious scholars who traditionally guide Muslim governments and populations on religious issues.

▶ To co-opt future recourse to violence, a forum for expression of all points of view, including those that are militant, will be important.

International considerations

- ▶ Afghans prefer to rely on Muslim nations and NGOs for assistance. Since Muslim institutions don't have the capabilities to support this level of nation-building, significant support from the UN will be required.

- ▶ As the United States plans its military withdrawal, it should lay the groundwork for establishing a partnership with Afghanistan that can help address future challenges in South and Central Asia.

- ▶ Many Muslims believe that real cultural dialogue will only become possible once Westerners learn enough about Islam to distinguish between the deeply-held beliefs of "fundamentalists" (a term that applies to all devout Muslims) and the emotional inflammatory political rhetoric of militants.

Other issues raised include

- ▶ How to bridge the gap between Western rationalism and Muslim religious sensibilities, e.g. how can western countries develop "faith-friendly" policies that enable Muslim societies to feel less pressured to choose between modernization and religious tradition.

- ▶ How to build new relationships between Islam and the West

- ▶ How to construct an effective partnership with India and Pakistan that will promote regional stability.

Introduction

Background

They honor the same patriarchs, venerate the same ancient prophets, share many of the same holy sites, and worship the same God; yet, the three great monotheistic, Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have seldom found peaceful coexistence an easy road. Cultural conflict, mutual misunderstanding, and strategic rivalries have plagued the relationship between the Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim world almost from the beginning, when Islam emerged out of Arabia in the seventh century CE. In the West, religious wars of the past gave way long ago to pragmatism in foreign affairs. In the Western mind, *Realpolitik* and *raisons d'etat* trump religious doctrine, faith, and cultural tradition as appropriate drivers of foreign policy. Yet, we seek to use our power and wealth in advancing and defending the values that we hold dear—religious tolerance, social and sexual equality, freedom of expression and conscience, political self-determination, and most important, economic liberty and democracy.

This belief in our own meliorism made the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the celebration they seemed to trigger in many parts of the Muslim world all the more stunning. The proliferation of newspaper and magazine articles with titles like "Why Do They Hate Us?" indicated that while many Americans had heard talk of a coming "clash of civilizations," few understood the depth and virulence of anti-Western and anti-modern resentment in many predominantly Muslim societies. Even less did Americans understand the degree to which that resentment focused on the government and people of the United States—a United States which had, after all, fought three major military campaigns in the 1990s in defense of Muslim peoples—Kuwaitis, Bosnians, and Kosovo Albanians—and mounted a huge humanitarian effort to assist Somali Muslims (with estimates of lives saved ranging from 100,000 to 300,000).

The September 11 terrorist attacks raised a number of troubling questions. Why would 19 well-educated, young, middle-class Muslims—largely from countries with which the United States has traditionally favorable relations—undertake suicidal attacks designed expressly to kill large numbers of Americans, in the words of one of the hijackers, "on their own ground." And why, despite apparently incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, were as many as 60 percent of Middle Eastern and other Muslims ostensibly convinced that the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks were either orchestrated by the Mossad to make Usama Bin Laden look bad or by the Central Intelligence Agency

to provide a pretext for waxing imperialistic in Central Asia? What is the source of Usama Bin Laden's almost mythic heroic status in many parts of the Muslim world, and how is his al-Qaida organization able to recruit perhaps tens of thousands of young people to join in his self-proclaimed jihad against America?

While Bin Laden has seized upon two strategic issues—the continued U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia and U.S. support for Israel—as partial justification for his terrorist campaign, it is clear that the real provocations are both deeper and more subjective, rooted more in culture and tradition than military and economic balances-of-power. As the United States engages in various campaigns to pursue justice for the victims of the terrorist acts of September 11th, establish enduring coalitions against terrorist networks, promote new international anti-terrorism norms, and protect the American homeland; there is an urgent need to understand the cultural and religious underpinnings of the increasing tension between Islam and the West. Ultimately, such understanding—not to mention concrete steps to improve relations between Islam and the West—will depend on establishing an effective dialogue between two substantially different cultures. And this dialogue must respect equally the world views of both the Muslim world and the West, embrace religion and tradition as issues of strategic importance, and allow for each to understand the other without requiring either to change its fundamental character.

The Need for Long-Term Strategic Relationships in South Asia

This ICRD–IDA conference focused specifically on the relationship between the United States and two South Asian Muslim countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan, while recognizing that the US relationship with India is also central to regional stability. The South Asia region may be key to the overall success of the war against terrorism, but its strategic significance is even broader. Not one of the September 11 terrorists was Afghan or Pakistani, yet until the U.S.-led military campaign overthrew the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was the center of al-Qaida training and operations. Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province—which shares porous borders with Afghanistan and has for the past two decades been the site of devastatingly poor and densely populated refugee camps—has become a hotbed of al-Qaida sympathizers and one of its prime recruiting bases. While the immediate threat of terrorism remains, a danger also exists that continued instability and political chaos in Afghanistan and militant Islamist sentiment in parts of Pakistan will provide a broader recruiting pool for al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. An equally pressing concern is the potential for the ongoing dispute over Kashmir to escalate into a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India. Any effective security strategy for the South Asian region will have to deal with a web of complex relation-

ships: the internal balance between national and regional identities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the political and strategic dynamics between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the complex rivalry between Pakistan and India, and the U.S. relationships with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the broader Muslim world.

The Internal Balance Between National and Regional Identities in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan—like modern Turkey—until recently struggled to establish itself as a modern secular state, with close and durable ties to the West. Because Islam has been Pakistan's sole legitimate source of national identity, its short history since inception in 1947 has been dominated by a struggle to provide a vision of statehood that resonates across its heterogeneous ethnic and regional identities. Pakistan and India both recently entered the ranks of the nuclear powers, and both have declared their intention to use their nuclear capabilities solely as deterrents and "weapons of last resort." This somewhat precarious nuclear balance, however, could radically change for the worse if the current Pakistani regime under General Pervez Musharraf were to be replaced by one espousing militant Islamist views.

For all these reasons, the United States has a stake in supporting the current Pakistani regime until the country can make a peaceful transition to democracy and civil order. In pursuit of that vital strategic objective, it is important for U.S. policymakers to understand how U.S. actions are perceived by Pakistani society, so that we avoid to the extent possible missteps and unintended consequences that could aggravate anti-U.S. sentiments and make the regional situation even more dangerous. Greater understanding is needed on how information about the West and the United States is presented to Muslim societies.

Ultimately, the survival of the Musharraf regime will depend on its ability to develop a national vision that overrides competing ethnic and regional identities. Militant Islam has found a fertile breeding ground in a chaotic Afghanistan; and the long-standing security crisis with India over issues such as Kashmir has necessitated a continuing diversion of scarce resources from social programs and domestic infrastructure to expensive military forces and hardware. This diversion has slowed both economic and social development, creating a breeding ground for more internal discontent. Finding effective ways to assist in building a stable regime in Afghanistan, and defusing the tension between India and Pakistan, will go a long way toward securing a stable and friendly South Asia.

Afghanistan is a nation deeply scarred by decades of conflict—the Soviet occupation, civil wars, and the hardships of the Taliban era. The military defeat and dissolution of the Taliban regime will be just the beginning of a broader effort to reconstruct Afghan government and society. Following the Afghanistan military campaign, the entire region will be undergoing significant change. In moving to create a more stable and secure environment, it will be essential for all parties to anticipate and determine how to deal with those factors that contribute to future instability, such as the resettlement of refugees. Even seemingly positive initiatives like the introduction of peacekeeping forces can have destabilizing consequences if they are not executed in a thoughtful manner. In such an environment, the development of effective confidence-building measures becomes particularly important.

Political and Strategic Dynamics Between Pakistan and Afghanistan

There are two important considerations to be taken into account in the relationship between Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan:

▶ First is the potential instability arising from the strong Pashtun presence on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border. This could spur calls for an independent Pashtun state, a greater Northwest Frontier Province within Pakistan, or regional separatist ambitions elsewhere in Pakistan. Rising Pashtun separatism could threaten the sovereignty and stability of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

▶ Second is Pakistan's desire for close cooperation with Afghanistan to achieve greater strategic depth in its ongoing confrontation with India over Kashmir.

U.S. Relationships with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Broader Muslim World

Policies and programs that the United States and the international community pursue in Afghanistan will inevitably impact the broader security of South Asia. Specifically, nuclear stability in South Asia depends on internal political stability in Pakistan; and long-term stability in Pakistan depends, to some degree, on establishing a stable Afghanistan. Winning the war against terrorism depends on stability in both countries.

Overshadowing immediate security concerns is the central role that religion plays in the lives and governance of the people in this region as well as their perceptions of the United States and its actions. Perhaps the greatest challenge for U.S. policy is to under-

stand how faith traditions influence South Asian perceptions of history and hopes for the future. Even when religious leaders do not play active roles in governing Muslim countries, they are extremely influential in shaping public opinion. In particular, Muslims turn to clerics and religious jurists for guidance on how to cope with change, especially change initiated from external sources such as that relating to modernization and globalization. For this reason, no dialogue on security issues can be complete without careful consideration of the religious dimension. In Afghanistan, religious leaders will certainly play an influential advisory role in the future government that emerges.

Discussion and Prominent Perspectives

Security and Stability

The Cultural Dimension of Security

A number of Muslim participants pointed out that, in their view, Western-derived concepts of security, particularly ones that focus on military defense and individual security law and order, do not go far enough in addressing the security needs of Muslim societies. In this regard, global economic integration and information technology can create a sense of insecurity to the degree that that they threaten traditional religious, cultural, political, and economic values, especially as they exist in the Muslim world. Accordingly, concepts of *security* in Afghanistan and the region should also include what might be characterized as *cultural security*.

In Afghanistan, security, peace, and stable development will most likely come about when Afghans believe they have:

▶ a representative government that is culturally and religiously authentic;

▶ a viable political process in which warlords and the population at large feel that they all have a stake in the new government's success;

▶ economic systems that can improve the quality of life (to include eradication of the drug economy);

▶ tolerance for minorities and respect for the rule of law; and

▶ most importantly, government that is sustainable without undue foreign interference.

The Role of the *Ulama* Council in Building Security and Stability

Islamic clerics play a unique and prominent role in the civic life of Muslim peoples. The *Ulama* Council, composed of senior Islamic clerics and scholars, traditionally informs the government on the religious propriety of decisions being taken, and enjoys tremendous credibility with and authority over Muslims, particularly those in Afghanistan. In much of Afghanistan, the *Ulama* Council has greater popular legitimacy than any other institution, and is therefore an indispensable (and unavoidable) partner in the pursuit of

stability, internal peace, and economic development. Meaningful and sustainable progress in stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan will probably not be possible without the active participation of the *Ulama* Council.

This acknowledgement runs counter to the aversion of many Americans to the involvement of Islamic clerics in government and the not uncommon assumption that all Islamic governments are necessarily totalitarian and anti-American. It is clear, however, that future relations with the Afghan state (or, for that matter, any Muslim state) would benefit from inter-religious dialogue with the prevailing clerical establishment.

Religious Terminology

Using correct religious terminology is important. As one Muslim participant pointed out, since Islam is an all-encompassing way of life that emphasizes *orthopraxy*[1], all Muslims are by definition "fundamentalists." By the same token, the vast majority of faithful, observant Muslims are moderate by nature and not prone to extremism. Thus the term "fundamentalist" is not synonymous with "militant." Muslims fear that Americans equate observant religious practice with "extremism," believing that Muslims are generally anti-modern and assuming that the primary goal of religious education in *madrassas* is to propagate extremism and hatred of the West. This leads to misunderstanding in two important respects: the role that Muslim clerics play in the civic life of Muslim people, and, the role that Islamic *madrassas* play in the education of Muslims.

In the view of some Muslim participants, even the most extremist views do not necessarily endanger peace and stability unless they are expressed through violence. The Western concept of civil rights includes the right to hold extremist political or religious views as long as doing so does not threaten the physical security or civil rights of other citizens. Some argued that U.S. pressure on their governments to crack down on extremists amounts to a double standard by implying that Muslim peoples are not capable of handling freedom of speech. Every broad-based society harbors views ranging from the moderate to the extreme. That is not to say that society will not include elements that are committed to violent methods, but to the extent that the West is able to distinguish between and deal effectively with *fundamentalism* vs. *militancy* extremist elements will find it more difficult to wrap themselves in cloaks of religious righteousness.

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[1] The correctness of practice or a body of practices accepted or recognized as correct. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, Inc., Springfield, MA, 1986.

A meaningful debate also needs to occur within Islam on the role militancy plays in advancing or hindering the interests of Muslims in a changing world. In the case of terrorism and other religiously justified violence against civilians, there is a need for clear international and interfaith definitions and norms of behavior.

Ideally, Muslims themselves would define when militancy exceeds theologically and culturally justifiable limits. In the view of some of the workshop's Muslim participants, the voices of extremism can and should be tolerated in public debate as long as they are not disruptive. In the long run, doing so serves everyone's interest since the cost of silencing extremist voices usually leads to frustration and instability. However, in the war against terrorism, a failure to define the violent acts of extremists as being beyond theologically and culturally justifiable limits will endanger efforts to promote improved relations with the West and greater regional stability.

Ways and Means to Prosper

Defining Prosperity in a Muslim Context

The working groups found it useful to define prosperity in the Islamic context before attempting to suggest an economic recovery path for Afghanistan. In every society, prosperity means more than just material wealth. In the Muslim world, individual material prosperity is balanced with other requirements for communal and spiritual well-being, such as pursuing wealth in ways that protect society and the environment, promoting and equitably distributing wealth to the poor, and enhancing social and cultural cohesion. Prosperity includes concepts of unity, justice, and trusteeship (i.e., the idea that humans are God's trustees on earth) as well as material possessions. Islam requires that prosperity contribute to the well being of the community (the *umma*), even when doing so acts counter to the interests of the individual.

Most Muslim participants stressed that Islam does not necessarily perceive a dichotomy between striving for material wealth and pursuing a spiritual life. One participant cited the Muslim philosopher Moulama Mawdudi who believed "a true Muslim has to be highly modern, scientifically advanced, and economically prosperous." However, there is a great deal about Western free-market economies that runs counter to Islamic tradition, especially with respect to what many Muslims perceive as an unjust (and immoral) distribution of wealth and a socially and morally destructive emphasis on materialism and individualism.

First Things First: Establishing Afghan Economic Development Priorities

The Muslim participants expressed particular concern that a Western-style market economy not be imposed on Afghanistan. Instead, the establishment of an economic system based on Islamic tradition—perhaps modeled after that of Malaysia but blended with authentic Afghan elements—should be the goal. No transplanted model, even one from another Muslim country, will work unless it incorporates uniquely Afghan features, although what that implies is not entirely clear at the present.

While some (especially U.S.) participants felt that it was important to integrate Afghanistan into the global economic system as soon as possible, others (especially Muslims) argued that it is much too early to discuss Afghanistan's involvement in globalization, while the country remains all-but-totally devastated. These participants urged a more basic and pragmatic near-term focus on rebuilding civil society and a basic national infrastructure; restoring fundamental government services; repatriating, housing, and feeding refugees; restoring agricultural production. To that end, the following priorities were identified:

- ▶ Establishing free and fair elections, transparent government, a functioning judicial system, and a national police force;

- ▶ Establishing security and stability, humanitarian assistance, and job training that is directly linked to national reconstruction; and

- ▶ Rebuilding educational and other infrastructure and facilitating development.

The reality in Afghanistan in mid-2002 is that very few institutions work, and most people have no means of supporting themselves or their families. Opinions were divided as to whether direct humanitarian assistance or creation of a security establishment would bring the greatest short-term payoff in terms of internal security. One view emerged that humanitarian assistance alone—especially food and medical care—would go a long way toward establishing internal stability. A healthy, well-fed population is less likely to collapse into social chaos. The counter view was that until a functioning Afghan police force is in place, humanitarian assistance will continue to operate at the sufferance of local strongmen and be diverted from those most in need. Beyond the immediate crisis, economic reconstruction requires the redevelopment of basic skills necessary to rebuild a society that has been preoccupied with war for decades. Education, especially vocational training, is a most pressing need. That view also held that economic reconstruc-

tion cannot proceed without internal security. Until the Afghans have an effective indigenous security force up and running, a viable multinational U.N. peacekeeping force—with a limited (and preferably no) U.S. military presence—should be in place before foreign military troops withdraw. To the extent possible, Muslim non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should take the lead in providing humanitarian and development aid.

Functional Governance

The Karzai transitional government was established in Afghanistan in the wake of the U.S. military campaign that deposed the Taliban. It is intended to operate as an interim administration, beginning the process of government and economic reconstruction until a more permanent and representative government can be established. The working groups focused on the next stage in the process, that of establishing functional governance in post-Karzai Afghanistan.

Centralized Versus Federal National Government

One important topic of the discussion was the relative utility of a federal versus a more centralized government structure, and the pros and cons of other constitutional options such as an Islamic model based on a consultative assembly or the Iranian Islamic Republic model, or some sort of tribal-federal model that echoes historical Afghan civil structures.

▶ Some participants argued that a strong centralized government—such as a monarchy—could best define, promote, and sustain a sense of shared national identity and unity. In the view of advocates of centralization, adopting a government structure that maintained and possibly even added to existing geographical "particularism" would perpetuate the divisive tribalism that has plagued the country in the past and undermined national unity and sovereignty.

▶ Others argued that because of Afghanistan's history of division along deep ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and tribal lines, a federal structure that retained a degree of local autonomy would have the best chance of gaining acceptance and surviving in the long term. Some form of autonomy for regions and/or tribal or ethnic groups could help balance the authority of the national government while preventing subjugation of minorities by the dominant Pashtun plurality

▶ While few participants believed a strong central government was a realistic goal in the near term, a number felt that tradeoffs between a central, national government and local autonomy were possible and vital to a functioning Afghan polity and economy.

In characterizing the desired attributes of a post-war Afghanistan, participants suggested the following:

▶ Any future Afghan government must dedicate itself to establishing and maintaining public order, the rule of law, and control of corruption.

▶ Adoption of a constitution that is both authentically Afghan and widely accepted, which provides for an independent judiciary and civilian police force capable of creating a stable environment where Afghan citizens can live and work and where businessmen, whether Afghan or foreign, will feel safe investing their resources.

▶ Elected offices in the new government should be representative, while appointed and civil-service jobs should be based on merit (using such measures of merit as integrity, competency, and commitment to public service).

Diversity and Internal Security

Many questions arose concerning what a broad-based popular government would look like. For example:

▶ Should it mean that all ethnic groups are to be represented equally or in some sort of proportional representation system (as the Parliamentary "set-asides" in India) that could ensure the majority does not trample the rights of the smallest minorities?

▶ Would representation be determined on the basis of language, ethnic background, regional or tribal affiliations, or some other set of qualifications? Given that no single group enjoys a clear majority—the current ethnic mix is roughly 35 percent Pashtun, 25 percent Tajik, 15 percent Hazara, 6 percent Uzbek, and 19 percent other groups (Aimak, Turkmen, Baluchi, Hindu)—too great an emphasis on pluralism could be a recipe for continued disorder.

▶ Even establishing an official language could prove problematic—roughly 50 percent of the population is Dari (Afghan Persian) speakers, but the domi-

nant ethnic group, the Pashtuns, have their own language. Altogether, Afghans speak some 35 different languages and dialects.

▶ Discussants generally favored the view that minority rights must be secured through a constitution and a judicial system; but the next logical question—how can the desire for a fair system of government be balanced with the need for political order—proved too complex for a ready answer.

In addition to minority rights, other security issues were discussed:

▶ Establishing a free and objective media as a means for constructive political debate. Such a media was viewed as essential to bringing about mutual understanding and building a national identity, but at the same time, a free media could set unrealistic expectations for the new government.

▶ The internationalization of border security must also be considered in managing the ethnic diversity along Afghanistan's borders. Border security has historically been difficult and over the past few decades, Afghanistan has become a pawn in the regional security machinations of its more powerful neighbors—Iran, Pakistan, and the former Soviet Union—as well as a dumping ground for the troublesome radical elements of the Gulf Arab states. It is vital that the Afghan people exert some control over their own political fate.

▶ Efficient use of fiscal, natural, and human resources are ongoing concerns that must be met through the development of a system of accountability and auditing that counters corruption and provides transparency in government.

Cultural Collaboration

Culture operates at various levels, ranging from the individual's sense of identity to the communication between groups and states. Cultural identities help define how a person chooses to be known or labeled, as well as shaping how individuals form groups, how groups interact, how attitudes and behaviors come to be normalized within societies, and how societies interact with one another. In addition to discussing perceptions of U.S.–Muslim cultural interactions, the participants identified several sources of ongoing concern:

▶ **Modernization.** Many traditional Muslims—along with people of some traditional European and Asian cultures—fear modernization as they see it expressed in American culture and values. For them, it threatens to destroy their traditional culture and social structure

▶ **Western hegemony.** While most Muslims see Western "cultural contamination" as unintentional, militant Islamists contend that the West has hegemonic intentions. They trace the pattern back to the imperialism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and argue that the current campaign of U.S. "cultural imperialism" seeks to humiliate and eventually obliterate Muslim culture. The belief that they are fighting a life-or-death battle for the survival of their culture and faith, and their conviction that the survival of Islam depends on a pre-modern interpretation and implementation of the *Sharia*, underlies much of their anti-Western rhetoric and, in extreme cases, acts of terrorism.

▶ **Seeking common ground.** Resurgent Islamic movements hold that while Muslims must reconnect with their religious identity, there is potential common ground with the West: it is possible for Muslim societies to be both modern and devout. Western leaders could develop a more sophisticated understanding of the intricacies of Islamic cultural dynamics and politics, and take concrete steps to identify groups that are ripe for constructive intercultural dialogue.

▶ **Cross-Cultural Communications.** Misunderstanding through miscommunications cuts both ways. If Westerners misunderstand "fundamentalism" to mean the same as militancy, Muslims are equally inclined to misunderstand the meaning of *secularism*, particularly as it applies to American culture and society. Muslims frequently think that because the United States has consciously built a secular government, America is an atheistic society in which God has been eliminated from daily life. In fact, the United States was founded on the principle of every citizen having the right to practice faith free from government compulsion or repression. As a founding principle of the American republic and a cornerstone of America's national identity, most Americans believe that individuals should be free to pray their own way and should never be forced to accept a particular religious tradition or be discriminated against because of their faith. The secular state does not aim to create a godless society but to ensure protection of all faith traditions through religiously neutral state institutions. One challenge to improving

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U.S.–Muslim relations will be closing this gap in understanding between the Muslim perception of America as a godless society and the reality of an American system striving to uphold religious freedom and tolerance.

Hierarchies of Identity in the Muslim World

Most societies, and most individuals within a society, have a dominant cultural identity. But most societies also have a degree of cultural diversity, and most individuals have more than one basis for their own sense of identity. Afghanistan and Pakistan are both predominantly Muslim countries in which the Muslim identity of the majority of the population goes a long way toward blurring other distinctions. At the same time, both Afghans and Pakistanis retain other primary loyalties, which, while not competing with their Muslim identity, may compete with other sources of identity. Afghan culture, for example, is characterized by a complex hierarchy of loyalties to Islam; to the tribe, clan, or family; and to Afghanistan as a nation. A key measure of successful Afghan leadership will be the achievement of a sense of unity among these diverse groups.

Culture itself will influence internal perceptions of the success or failure of a future Afghan national government, since culture informs deeply held attitudes concerning the proper role of Afghan leaders. While the Afghans should be given whatever help they need to build their national government, the form that government initially takes must be consistent with cultural beliefs and attitudes—regardless of whether those attitudes conform to Western norms and expectations. In particular, working group participants stressed that the central government should not be too strong, and that it should not aspire to some sort of national omnipotence. A more realistic expectation for the Afghan government is that it acts as a facilitator and mediator rather than as an architect or micro-manager. The people in Afghanistan are accustomed to depending upon local leaders and scholars for guidance and assistance, and will continue to do so. Central government can and should provide infrastructure and basic services such as public education and communications. The government will be most effective if it is designed to work effectively in partnership with local community and province leadership.

While Afghan participants stressed that the existing identities transcend ethnic ties to some extent, it seems clear that an Afghan national identity needs to be strengthened if the country is to create stable central and provincial governments.

➤ Some participants suggested that it might be possible to create a "hyphenated" identity that would enable Afghans (similar to that which exists for some Americans) to share a national identity without sacrificing their ethnic-

ity. Only time will tell whether an Afghan can feel comfortable being a Tajik-Afghan or a Pashtun-Afghan.

▶ Some ethnic disaffection might be countered by a strong central-level government that could empower otherwise un-represented minorities.

▶ Tribal identity is another sub-national loyalty that has plagued Afghan unity. There was some disagreement as to what degree tribal identities override other identities, particularly as to how they vary between rural and urban Afghans. The strength of tribal identity may be affected by economic position or other socio-political factors. A better understanding of tribal dynamics is needed in addressing national identity issues.

Maintaining a workable balance between various interest and minority groups and the central and provincial governments will require harmonizing the multiple and sometimes conflicting identities of the Afghan people. What most Afghans seek is the freedom to be loyal and patriotic citizens without sacrificing their ethnic and tribal identities.

The Need for Muslim Patrons and Mentors

Many working group participants opined that Afghans would be more likely to look to fellow Muslim countries as patrons and role models for their new government. That said, there are significant differences in where they are likely to look for guidance based on regional or ethnic affiliation. For example:

▶ The Pashtuns are more rural and conservative and are likely to be suspicious of any outside interference. Turkey, however, has long and generally friendly historical ties with the Pashtuns and could play a positive role in peacekeeping and reconstruction. Its staunchly secular national identity, however, will limit its utility as a civil role model.

▶ The Tajiks and Uzbeks in Afghanistan are somewhat more open to outside influence and, because of ethnic ties, are likely to look northward, to Central Asia, for support.

▶ Many of the ethnic groups that make up the patchwork of Afghanistan have significant populations in neighboring states; for example, Pashtuns in Pakistan; Tajiks, Turkmens, and Uzbeks in Central Asia; and Shi'a in Iran. If too much emphasis is given to regional authorities or to outside "mentors," Af-

ghanistan might disintegrate, as neighboring states exert greater influence in the border regions.

In building the new Afghan government and setting up a functioning economy, Muslim role models can be a source of valuable experience and precedence for balancing *sharia* and secular civic structures. Although there are small non-Muslim and non-Sunni minorities in Afghanistan, precedents do exist for dealing with minority rights as they pertain to Islamic law. One mentioned was the system currently used in Oman where *sharia* courts function without constitutional restraints and are free to impose any sentences they feel appropriate according to strict interpretation of Islamic law. In practice, however, the Sultan of Oman automatically commutes any sentence of death or dismemberment.

Similarly, Muslim nations like Malaysia have made significant progress in deconflicting Islamic economic principles from the laws and norms of the global economy. The objectives of the *sharia* and of an Islamic government are the collective preservation of faith, life, honor, property, and intellect. While they could accept constitutional arrangements that enable non-Muslims to conduct their personal and family affairs according to their own faith traditions, supporters of *sharia* and Islamic government are unlikely to tolerate any system that enforces individual or minority rights to the detriment of the sensibilities and coherence of Muslim society as a whole.

Religion and Education

It is true that the *madrassas* have a narrow religious curriculum, but so too do Jewish Yeshivas. It is also true that some radical *madrassas,* especially along the Muslim periphery, teach anti-Western, anti-modern, and anti-U.S. dogma. But Muslim participants in the working groups pointed out that many of the young Muslims who are most angry with the West (including most of the September 11th terrorists) have received secular educations, often in Western countries. They maintained that most Muslims who have received some formal religious education are more culturally and spiritually grounded and therefore secure and, as a result, do not feel as threatened by the West. Clearly, economic recovery in Afghanistan and Pakistan will depend on the establishment of public educational systems capable of preparing young people for jobs; but there is no reason that such secular education cannot coexist with more traditional religious education. In light of the existing emphasis on traditional religious education, however, the *'Ulama* council would likely have to endorse such an arrangement.

The recent role of the *madrassas* cannot be overlooked as a factor in shaping the current cultural identity of many Afghans. Under the Taliban regime, the *madrassas* provided the only public education in Afghanistan, excluded women and girls, offered a limited curriculum, and taught an extremely militant combination of Wahhabi–Hanbali Islam and al-Qaida ideological dogma. U.S. participants at the conference endorsed the idea that an Afghan governmental commission on education be established, to ensure that religious education in all Afghan schools would be free of militant indoctrination and would promote greater tolerance and cross-cultural understanding—in both the intra-Afghan and international contexts. Muslim participants countered that a better and more culturally acceptable option in the Afghan context would be for a religious commission to oversee education—perhaps with governmental participation—since it is within the faith community that both the resistance to secular education and ultimately the hopes for balancing secular and religious education lie. Several participants endorsed the idea of working through Islamic NGOs to reform the *madrassas* as part of rebuilding the secular education system that existed prior to the Taliban regime. Involving educated ex-patriot Afghanis in this process could help ensure that secular public education would retain the distinctiveness of Afghan culture.

Bridging the Disconnects

Disconnects Between Islam and the West

Bridging disconnects between Western and Muslim views is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the factors that make people distinct are interwoven like a fabric and no one thread—say, religion—can be treated separately from the others. Still, religion is the long pole in the tent for social, political, and economic change in the Muslim world. While our history, culture, ethnicity, politics, and economics all influence how we view the world, and ourselves, religion plays a more dominant role in how most Muslims see themselves and their world. Since we are largely unconscious of how our beliefs shape what we think, attempting to understand others through the lens of our own values and related assumptions—however "universal" we hold them to be—will often cause us to generalize, delete and distort information, preventing an accurate understanding of other's distinctiveness. These misunderstandings can block opportunities to find common ground in our differences with others.

A second difficulty in relating Western and Muslim views arises from the messages we send one another, both intentionally and unintentionally, which often introduce ambiguity, uncertainty, and sometimes fear. Perceptions of relative strength and weakness in ourselves and others often cause us to hear messages only in ways that are consistent

with our own beliefs and preconceptions as opposed to listening for the richer context in which the messages are conceived. Since much thought is informed by news media reporting of events, the language of such reporting often reinforces irrational fears and prejudices in both the Western and Muslim worlds. Both sides seem trapped in patterns of mirror imaging—perceiving and judging words, actions, and intentions solely through the lens of their own, culturally determined values and norms.

Constructive dialogue requires, first, a conscious and mutual effort to move beyond our respective fears and prejudices to clear the way for real cross-cultural communication that can begin to recognize, acknowledge, and finally bridge our differences. That dialogue must begin with a frank discussion of perceptions on both sides that proceeds from mutual agreement that the same events can legitimately be interpreted differently. This approach honestly and unflinchingly explores the apparent contradictions and misconceptions in both Western and Muslim perceptions that stifle effective communication and relationship. Cross-cultural dialogues should occur at all levels—international, regional and local—and in various sectors of society including religious and government officials, business people, and grassroots laity.

The working groups identified a number of issues they saw as particularly ripe for cross-cultural dialogue. As might be expected, many were directly related to religious issues, especially the challenge of balancing the role of faith and religious law in Muslim societies with the challenges of coping with modernization and globalization. Among these issues were:

- ▶ the utility of Islamic vs. secular state models;

- ▶ the need for clarifying the distinctions between religious fundamentalism and militancy;

- ▶ conflicts between religious and other sources of identity;

- ▶ the role and treatment of women in Muslim societies;

- ▶ the importance of the family in Muslim societies;

- ▶ finding ways for religious and technical education to coexist

- ▶ dealing with militancy in the *madrassa* system;

- ▶ accepting religious diversity in predominantly Muslim societies;

▶ balancing Muslim orthopraxy and civil rights; and

▶ the responsibility of Muslim organizations (e.g., the Organization of Islamic Conference, individual Muslim states, and Muslim NGOs) in bridging the gaps between the West and Muslim worlds.

But an additional set of issues also arose—largely in relation to the challenge of rebuilding and restructuring the Afghan state and society—that focused on what Westerners tend to see as "objective" principles of economics and governance. Among the issues that Muslim participants raised were:

▶ the pros and cons of decentralized authority vs. centralized authority;

▶ the downside of open-market economics in the developing world;

▶ the kinds of mechanisms needed to balance the need for economic growth with the imperative of alleviating poverty;

▶ the threat posed by unconstrained freedom of expression and Western-style democracy to traditional societies;

▶ the need to redistribute global wealth to ensure that poorer societies have the necessary resources to deal with their problems; and

▶ the pros and cons of internally versus externally imposed solutions.

Another theme that emerged from these discussions was the recognition that few mechanisms currently exist for meaningful dialogue between the United States and the Muslim world. Too often, official exchanges—whether through direct government channels or in other formal international forums—end up talking past one another. Establishing an effective dialogue between the United States and the Muslim world will require the establishment of new institutions, forums, and means for reconciling differences. The Muslim world also needs new and more effective means for communicating, internally among Muslims, as well as externally between Muslims and the West.

Disconnects Between Afghan Factions

Establishing more effective communications between competing groups is not solely a West versus Islam issue. The participants were virtually unanimous in their conviction that meaningful and robust communication among various ethnic, tribal, and interest groups will be critical to the success of any future Afghan government, whatever form

it may take. Much of the tragedy of recent Afghan history has flowed from the breakdown of traditional consultative structures, leading to internecine violence as a resort for resolving differences.

Any future Afghan government must—first and foremost—build credibility with the predominant Afghan factions. That credibility will depend in part on the degree to which its government's form and leadership reflect the desires and aspirations of the Afghan people (as opposed to being seen as imposed by the West or the international community). In order to succeed, the government must possess the legitimacy to balance Muslim traditions and Islamic law with the practical issues of rebuilding the country. Building that legitimacy will depend, in large part, on the new government's ability to facilitate an active and meaningful dialogue with Afghans of all ethnic, tribal, and political stripes and on the role of religious authorities in legitimizing it.

The role of religious leaders will also be crucial in promoting national reconciliation and reconstruction. As mentioned earlier, the Islamic faith is the single loyalty that trumps almost all others among the majority of Afghan people. Religious leaders acting in close partnership with the civilian government have tremendous power to knit together diverse sources of Afghan identity into a cohesive national identity.

New forms of public information and communication media similar to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty that report on internal and regional developments relating to the rebuilding of Afghanistan could also promote a greater sense of national unity. Such media initiatives should be complementary to broader U.S. diplomatic and security objectives, and while they may initially elicit a degree of resistance, their goal of promoting greater Afghan national unity should be an important theme. As was the case of al-Jazeera (which had enthusiastic U.S. government support when the Emir of Qatar first approved its establishment), the United States may have to accept the reality that it will not always like what a free and open media in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Muslim world broadcasts. But, as Muslim participants pointed out, that should not detract from their right to speak their mind. Neither should it prevent the West from presenting its case; but presenting it effectively will require a deeper understanding of how to speak credibly to Muslim audiences.

While free elections remain a distant goal for Afghanistan, any new government should include the eventual goal of holding such elections as part of the internal political dialogue. Doing so will demonstrate its confidence in its ability to control violence, to calm the chaotic security environment, and to move Afghanistan in the direction of representative government. After the Soviet invasion and subsequent *jihad*, the people of Af-

ghanistan became more politically conscious and developed a stronger sense of shared identity, as reflected, for example, in the widespread perception of the Taliban (whom the Afghans called "the Arabs") as outsiders. The process of government selection will matter to them, and this new consciousness may change how national institutions like the *Loya Jirga* are formed in the future.

Education will play a significant role in bridging the internal disconnects in Afghanistan and, hence, in the success of future governments. The educational system in any society is a powerful mechanism for instilling national identity and civic values. It can also, of course, instill ideological rigidity and xenophobia. On balance, however, an educated, literate population capable of critical thinking and making informed political choices is most likely to serve Afghanistan's interests well over the long term. The population of Afghanistan is currently divided into a small, educated minority and a vast uneducated majority. Most of the educated people have been exposed to the West, which has helped them bridge the gap between Western and Islamic values. Real issues remain, however, on how best to address the educational needs of the majority and on what role Western models should play in rebuilding the education system.

Whatever form the educational system takes, it can play a vital role in fostering the norms that most agreed will help promote a secure Afghanistan: justice, political pluralism, representative government, peaceful conflict resolution, recognition of human rights, and a society committed to the safeguarding of minority rights.

The military has traditionally also played the role of "school of the nation" in developing countries; in Afghanistan, it could do the same. The Afghan army needs to develop a multi-ethnic, truly national force that can help create a sense of national identity. But—as will also hold true for education—the army can only become an effective "school of the nation" once Afghans have developed a clear and essentially inclusive concept of what kind of nation they aspire to build. This end state, in turn, will come to pass only to the degree that religious (and probably also tribal) leaders participate in the process and sanction its outcome in terms that are consistent with Islamic interpretation.

Alternatives for the Future

The charge to individual working groups in their final session was to pull together their perspectives from previous sessions and draft a prioritized set of recommendations for establishing effective security, prosperity, governance, and communal identity in post-

Taliban Afghanistan. A number of common themes, most of which had already been addressed in earlier discussions, emerged in these final, summary discussions.

Internal and External Security

No permanent political or economic progress will be possible in Afghanistan until the country is secure, both internally and externally. Some discussants viewed that security in Afghanistan would require a rapid transition from a U.S. military presence to a U.N. peacekeeping force and that the U.S. role in post-conflict Afghanistan should be low profile in nature, minimizing the U.S. military presence. This will reassure the Afghans and the broader Muslim world that the United States has no plans to establish a permanent "imperial" presence as the British and Soviets attempted to do in the past. The Afghans will accept U.S. advice and assistance in planning new military and internal security forces; but oversight of implementation should take place under U.N. auspices. Humanitarian organizations and NGOs can oversee the establishment of health care and social welfare infrastructure, refugee repatriation, and the delivery of humanitarian relief issues.

Muslim participants felt strongly that establishing a stable government structure should be left to the Afghans themselves, with support from Muslim countries and benign non-interference from the West.

Prosperity

Building economic prosperity in Afghanistan will require a serious and long-term commitment from private businesses, technical experts, and financial institutions as well as from both Muslim and Western governments. Some of the more pressing needs that the private sector and NGOs could help meet includes:

► Crop substitution and diversification, technical advice and assistance, and farm subsidies to enable Afghans to build an agricultural sector that is not dependent on the production of opium.

► Technical advice and investment in the exploration and exploitation of other natural resources;

► Investment and technical expertise in the construction and repair of critical infrastructure such as water, sewage, and irrigation systems, roads and highways, rail transport, and communications;

▶ Financial aid to rebuild schools and reconstitute the educational and vocational training establishments;

▶ Guidance and expertise in building a viable banking and financial system; and

▶ Assistance in reviving the print, television, and radio media in Afghanistan.

Reconstitution of the Civil Infrastructure

All of the conference participants agreed that an essential prerequisite to nation building in Afghanistan is the resurrection of an educational system that reaches Afghans of both sexes in all regions. But education in Afghanistan must reach beyond primary and secondary school students. Job training is badly needed, not only to get Afghans working but also to provide the urgently needed manpower for national reconstruction. An internal civic dialogue needs to take place that can inform even illiterate Afghans on their rights and responsibilities as citizens. While international NGOs will almost certainly conduct most health and human services functions in the near future, the establishment of an indigenous social service system, including the training of doctors, nurses, and social workers, that is capable of coping with both short-term crises and long-term challenges should be as high priority as well.

Toward a New U.S.–Afghan Relationship

No one believes that any of this will be easy. The challenges facing Afghanistan in national reconstruction are difficult—but not insurmountable. Substantial national and international resources are available to facilitate the recovery and reconstruction process, provided the Afghans themselves are able and willing to exploit them effectively. The international community, and the United States in particular, have a responsibility to reassure the people of Afghanistan that they will not be abandoned once again and left to rebuild their country without resources or outside help. In this regard, the United States, the European Union, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are not their only recourse. They can draw upon the talent and treasure of the Afghan and Muslim *diasporas*, Muslim NGOs, the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the international private sector.

Afghans can also draw upon their most underutilized human resource: Afghan women. Even within the constraints of traditional Muslim social mores, women could play a vital role in education, heath care, and social services. Afghan women have already demonstrated their resiliency and resourcefulness, holding their families and communities

together, and running schools, clinics and charitable organizations under the harsh conditions imposed by invasion, civil war, and Taliban rule.

That said, the Afghans cannot expect a blank check. Those providing financial assistance and investment will expect strict accountability and program management consistent with accepted international norms and standard business practices, although allowances can clearly be made to conform to Muslim religious sensibilities. The balance between the need for accountability (to reassure donors and investors and deter corruption) and the recipients' sensitivities concerning outside manipulation and interference will be delicate. One possible approach would be to establish a central clearinghouse for gathering and distributing external financial, material, and human resources that could be managed by a U.N. agency, preferably in cooperation with a Muslim NGO. The United Nations, like other foreign, non-Muslim institutions, is the focus of considerable suspicion within Afghanistan, but it remains the only organization equipped to provide the resources and management infrastructure in country that will enable success. Ultimately, the goal is to transfer management of national reconstruction to the Afghans as soon as possible.

Some Muslim participants repeatedly stressed that while it is crucial for the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan to end as soon as possible, it does not necessarily follow that Afghans would refuse all foreign presence, including foreign technical consultants, aid workers, private businesses, and NGOs. While many Afghans are (not unreasonably) suspicious of foreigners and their motives, some of the South Asian participants asserted that resentment is presently focused on the official U.S. military and governmental presence. Other participants questioned this assertion, but the undeniable reality is that for the foreseeable future, Afghanistan is seriously deficient in the trained human resources required to oversee effective reconstruction of their country, independent of foreign (especially Western) assistance. The challenge will be to conduct foreign programs in Afghanistan in ways that respect cultural sensitivities. That challenge can be partially met by actively involving tribal and religious leaders in foreign aid and development programs.

The United States has in the past treated its relationship with Afghanistan as a peripheral element of some other strategic relationship: first, the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union; more recently, as an adjunct to the anti-terrorism coalition and the strategic partnership with Pakistan. In the future, stability in South Asia will require a U.S. partnership with Afghanistan *in its own right*. Developing such a partnership will depend in large part on how well the United States manages perceptions of its intentions in the region.

Some Muslim participants raised questions concerning the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, its duration, mission, and the criteria for withdrawal. They expressed the conviction that one of the greatest stumbling blocks to harmonious relations between Afghanistan and the United States is the current belief that the United States is in Afghanistan to pursue broader hegemonic and economic interests, much like the British and Russians before them, and that the war against terrorism is merely a pretext for pursuing these interests. Other participants discounted this view as not widely held by Afghans. The predominant view of American participants—that the United States does not seek (and would not accept) a long-term involvement in Afghanistan—was met with skepticism by the same Muslim participants who voiced suspicion of U.S. intentions. The message is clear: the United States needs to do a better job of communicating to Afghans and the rest of the region its purpose and intentions. A healthy U.S. relationship with Afghanistan is essential both for Afghanistan's stability and for stability of the region. If the United States limits its strategic focus to Pakistan, it will find itself limited in its ability to promote stability in the region over the long term. Developing enduring relationships with Afghanistan, India, and perhaps beyond is paramount to establishing the United States as a non-threatening player in the security landscape of South Asia.

Next Steps

Bridging the considerable gaps in understanding and communications that exist between the Western and the Muslim worlds can only happen through a mutual commitment to an ongoing dialogue aimed at reducing polarization and increasing common ground.

In this first conference, a number of important cross-cultural issues were discussed candidly and at some length. Others, however, were recognized as important (and sometimes central), but too complex to address in a two-day effort. The participants agreed that if an ongoing dialogue can be sustained, progress would be possible on even the most difficult issues.

This chapter will suggest themes for future conferences to expand cross-cultural dialogue on the more problematic but also potentially more productive issues. By tackling the challenges of rebuilding Afghanistan, American interest in the Afghan people and the future of Afghanistan will be conveyed and a stronger foundation for examining and bridging the broader gaps in Western-Muslim understanding will be established.

The task of rebuilding Afghanistan, which has already begun, will likely continue for decades and involve support from a wide range of countries, NGOs, and private interests. The process will require vision, new partnerships, and patience. This conference discussed the role of the United States in that rebuilding process and explored historic and present-day Muslim models for reconstruction. In examining possible next steps, the challenges of rebuilding the Afghan nation in the face of ethnic, regional, and tribal divisions must be addressed along with Islam's role in creating and sustaining pluralistic democratic processes.

The U.S. Role in Afghanistan

A case can be made that the United States bears significant moral and political responsibility for Afghanistan's current predicament. It was Soviet aggression that drew the United States into Afghan internal affairs over two decades ago, with the United States responding by arming anti-Soviet *mujahideen*, providing ongoing training and assistance through the 1980s, and then abandoning Afghanistan to its fate once the Soviet incursion collapsed. All of this contributed to creating the political and social milieu from which civil war and eventually the Taliban emerged.

Defining an appropriate U.S. role in the painstaking process of rebuilding and stabilizing Afghanistan will require a degree of soul-searching on both sides.

▶ The United States will have to accept the fact that its commitment to assist Afghanistan should be serious and sustained over time, even after the last Taliban and al-Qaida supporters have been eradicated.

▶ The Afghans, for their part, will have to take responsibility for making the kinds of internal change that will make Western help both more likely and meaningful.

▶ Both sides need to engage in an ongoing robust bilateral dialogue with an eye, over the long term, to building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation. The United States should play a benevolent and supportive role in planning, financing, and implementing plans for the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan, and do so in a manner that empowers the government of Afghanistan, while laying the groundwork for a new strategic partnership.

Divergent Expectations

The West, the Muslim world as a whole, and the Afghan people themselves have quite different and often divergent expectations for a reconstructed Afghanistan. Among the elements of this divergence, at least four seem most pressing and potentially important: strategic independence, balance of power, the (future) Afghan economy, and political legitimacy.

▶ First, what should be Afghanistan's eventual degree of strategic independence? Will it be a client state of the United States, a satellite of Pakistan, or a neutral South Asian "Switzerland"? To what degree will the Afghan people have to accept external conditions and interference in exchange for financial and material support for reconstruction?

▶ Second, what balance of power between secular and religious authorities is acceptable to the Afghan people, to Muslim regimes like Pakistan, and to the United States?

▶ Third, the United States tends to view a reconstructed Afghanistan as synonymous with a viable, growing, and integrated Afghan economy. Afghans themselves and many other Muslims argue that economic development cannot come at the expense of cultural and religious security and cohesion.

What is the right balance of priorities and what should be the role of religious leaders in articulating that balance? How "integrated" should Afghanistan be in the international system; and to what degree might less emphasis on globalization perpetuate the historic xenophobia of Afghans?

► Finally, what defines social and political "legitimacy" for Afghan leaders? Many of those who enjoy a high degree of respect and legitimacy in the West—Hamid Karzai, for example—do not necessarily command the same legitimacy across Afghanistan. Others—such as important tribal and religious leaders—are regarded as having a high degree of legitimacy inside Afghanistan but are viewed with suspicion and even concern in the West.

The Limits of Historical Analogies and Muslim Models

The United States has had considerable experience in facilitating the reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged societies, including former enemies such as Germany and Japan after World War II and the Eastern European states following the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Unfortunately, that experience may not have much relevance in the case of Afghanistan. Thinking of the problem in terms of a "Marshall Plan" for Afghanistan is unlikely to work because Afghanistan lacks many of the shared cultural, political, and economic elements that Germany, Eastern Europe, and even Japan had with the United States. In the Afghan body politic, transplanting U.S. and Western institutions and political and economic concepts would, in all likelihood, have adverse consequences. For the most part, Afghan historical and cultural experiences have created little foundation for Western style democracy and economic liberalism. As a result, the United States and the West in general need to be open to and tolerant of the evolution of uniquely Muslim and Afghan economic and representative political principles and structures.

For their part, Islamic religious leaders will have to be open to compromise and new ideas that allow Afghanistan to better balance religious practices with its need for economic development. The hard reality is that few successful Islamic economic models exist, and the ones that do, such as Malaysia, have made some necessary compromises on issues like charging interest and investment. Islamic religious leaders need to resolve whether changes that inevitably result from economic reform and development necessarily threaten much more deeply held values and religious principles at the foundations of traditional Muslim culture.

The Challenge of Ethnic, Regional, and Tribal Divisions

Ethnic, regional, and tribal divisions within Afghan society remain a tremendous barrier to stability in Afghanistan. There are few encouraging examples of building effective and durable multi-ethnic political structures:

▶ Yugoslavia and Lebanon both collapsed into endemic violence.

▶ The Soviet Union dissolved once its center-of-gravity, Russia, fell into political and economic crisis and proved no longer able to maintain the level of force necessary to hold its empire together.

▶ Ironically, India may provide the most relevant example of coping with ethnic, regional, and religious diversity, although its vibrant (if often untidy) democracy is built on a central principle of constitutional secularism.

Islam's Role In Rebuilding Afghanistan

The larger Muslim world, including but not limited to those states that contributed to instability in Afghanistan, must accept greater responsibility for rebuilding that country and improving stability in the region. It is not enough to stand on the sidelines and carp about U.S. and Western perfidy. Intra-Islamic efforts are needed to think through and help deal with important issues like the modernization of Islamic economic and legal structures.

The inability or unwillingness of some Muslim regimes to find a comfortable voice for Islamists in their national political dialogue, and the inability or unwillingness of Islamists to develop a political style and rhetoric that is at once constructive and less threatening to social stability and cohesion have been among the most important sources of political instability in the Muslim world and cross-cultural tension with the West. This burden is on Muslims, and Islamists in particular, to counter perceptions among both Western observers and secular Muslim regimes that Islamism is at heart anti-democratic; and that Islamist political parties, if allowed to participate in pluralistic democratic processes, will use democratic means to acquire power and then shut the door to future elections.

Themes for Future Dialogue: Bridging the Gaps in U.S.–Muslim Understanding

In spite of the daunting task of rebuilding Afghanistan and forging new partnerships that bring stability to the region, conference participants expressed optimism that con-

tinuing cross-cultural dialogue could bridge many of the gaps in U.S.–Muslim under-standing. Three important generic themes were suggested for future discussions:

▶ addressing the sources of cross-cultural misunderstanding in the religion and national life of Muslim and Western societies;

▶ developing new models for U.S.–Muslim relationships; and

▶ building new strategic partnerships in South Asia.

Religion and National Life in Muslim Society and the Western Societies

Apart from discussions of the future of Afghanistan, the theme that emerged most consistently was the need for greater mutual understanding of how faith and religious traditions shape national policies, institutions, and civic life in the United States and the Muslim world. The issue came up most often in discussions of the challenge of de-conflicting Western-derived, "rationalist" economic, political, and social norms from Muslim religious sensibilities. The core of that challenge is in incorporating Islamic principles and laws into national constitutions in a manner that both honors tradition and instills the kind of confidence needed to reassure foreign investors that the rule of law is at work. This challenge cuts in the other direction as well: how can the United States and international institutions (like the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization) develop more faith-friendly norms and policies that help traditional societies, including but not limited to Muslim societies, find a middle ground between what some would term 'godless modernization' and strict ad-herence to the religious traditions of the past?

Developing New Models for U.S.–Muslim Relationships

The United States and Muslim peoples will have to build new relationships for the future by working together more effectively. On that path, they will have to ponder and address the following:

▶ What characteristics should these new relationships have?

▶ How can we incorporate the lessons of the past to build new relationships?

▶ What roles can public information play in both Western and Muslim socie-ties to foster improved understanding?

▶ What new channels for cross-cultural dialogue can be identified and pursued?

Building New Partnerships in South Asia

Clearly, the United States will have to undertake a separate relationship with the new Afghan government to foster stability in South Asia. Equally important is the relationship of both countries to Pakistan[2]. Some critical questions frame these future relations:

▶ What do the United States and Pakistan expect from one another over the long term?

▶ What are our shared interests? Where do our interests diverge and what are the key cultural and strategic differences that need to be resolved?

▶ Finally, what are the sources of popular resentment of the United States within Pakistan, and what can the United States do to mitigate them?

Toward Intercultural Reconciliation

The themes that emerged from this conference point to the need for new forums for cross-cultural communication between the United States and the Muslim world. While much of the important work must, of course, be conducted through official channels, there is also much that can and probably should be done at a more informal and less politically charged level.

To capture a wide range of perspectives, these seminars should involve individuals from a number of sectors on both sides, the legislative and executive branches and offices of governments, private organizations, and religious clergy and laity. While it will be government and military leaders who make the strategic and policy decisions, it is the public that ultimately determines whether those policies succeed or fail. If mutual understanding is to make a real difference in long-term relations between the West and the Muslim world, that understanding must develop at the grassroots level to the extent possible. Agreements among elites seldom last.

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[2] Although this first conference focused primarily on rebuilding Afghanistan and Pakistan's role in that undertaking, regional stability in South Asia is also closely tied to the India-Pakistan relationship, especially with regard to the future of Kashmir. Future conferences could expand participation to include representatives who could speak to the broader security issues in the region.

Appendix A. Opening Statements of the Conference

Introductory Remarks of Dr. Douglas Johnston, President, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy: "The Need for Cultural Engagement"

At the beginning of the last millennium, Christianity and Islam were locked in mortal combat over their mutual claims to the Holy Lands. Fast-forward a thousand years and you get the uneasy feeling that not much has changed. Why is it that these two world religions, which share more in common theologically than any other two, talk past one another at best or, alternatively, resort to conflict to settle their differences? A big reason for this gap in understanding is the fact that we speak different languages. The West speaks the language of secularism, while Islam speaks that of integration—integration of the religious with the political in order to create a society on earth that is pleasing to Allah. Recalling that secularism arose out of the metaphysical debates surrounding the Reformation, it is important to recognize that imposing secular constructs on people who do not similarly separate church and state, can be (and often is) viewed as being every bit as sectarian as would be an attempt by them to impose their particular religious template on us. Even words used in common are not translated the same. When we in the West use the term "secular," Muslims hear "Godless," while what was intended was the idea of worshipping as one pleases. The Gallup poll of two days ago, which indicated that 61 percent of the close to 10,000 Muslims interviewed think that Arabs had nothing to do with the attacks of September 11, is indicative of just how wide this gap is.

Equally instructive was our Center's experience in hosting six prominent leaders from the Sudan and Kashmir at the National Prayer Breakfast this past month. To a person, the five who where Muslims indicated great surprise in seeing how deeply religious faith informs our democratic process. They also said they felt much closer as a result. Just a few days prior to that breakfast, we had conducted several days of reconciliation training for top Muslim and Christian leaders in the Sudan. During the course of that training, both sides agreed that their common submission to God provided a significant basis for resolving differences through faith-based reconciliation.

Our Center is committed to bridging the chasm between Islam and the West through the practice of what we call "faith-based diplomacy"; that is, by integrating consideration of religious imperatives with the practice of international politics. Bridging this di-

vide is also what this conference is about, and why I want to thank all of you, and most particularly our foreign guests, for taking the time and making the effort to join us in this important undertaking.

Keynote Remarks of Dr. al-Tayib Zein al-Abdin, Head of the Political Science Department, Islamic University, Islamabad: "Reactions of Muslims to American Policies"

The American image immediately after World War II was very high simply because it wasn't associated with any colonial ideas. People appreciated the values of democracy and human rights being brought forth. Now the situation is very different, and the impressions of American policy are very negative. On a flight from Islamabad and Karachi, two Muslim passengers discussed the attacks of September 11. The lady passenger sitting next to me firmly believed that the Americans were responsible. When asked why, she said that Americans wanted to further their agenda in the Muslim world. This is an extreme example of the gap between Muslims and Americans. Some Muslims know that their view of America may be based on inaccurate information but will not make the effort to change that viewpoint.

America's unequivocal support for Israel versus Palestine is one of the main sticking points and a reason for the deep distrust among Muslims. At the same time, Muslims feel that Americans misunderstand the reasons for such mistrust, attributing it to the fact that Islamic people do not appreciate the American way of life, democracy, and human rights. Many Islamic people have been educated in the West and appreciate most Western values. But at the same time, they believe that American behavior is inconsistent with these values, especially in the Middle East, where it often supports corrupt authoritarian governments because those governments will support American policy. There are, of course, differing ideas on the appropriate treatment of men and women in society, but this is not a big issue.

In the case of Iraq, that regime is not popular to many people in the Arab world. But the continuous punishments imposed on Iraq are hurting the people rather than the regime. Muslims feel that America wanted a good reason to establish its presence in the region, and that the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was merely a pretext. People of South Asia now feel something similar, that Americans are in the area for the long term, not just to eliminate al-Qaeda and the Taliban but also to pursue self-serving economic interests in the region, etc.

In Pakistan, educated people who are exposed to the international media feel that they were betrayed by America in a number of situations despite having an alliance since the

1950s. They feel they were abandoned by America in its two wars against India while Russia supported India in those same wars. Relations were very good between America and Pakistan when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan, however, Muslims felt the United States had accomplished its goals and left Pakistan to cope with the refugees, instability, and violence on its own.

Further straining the relationship was the feeling that America was not mindful of Pakistani security concerns. The United States put strong pressure on Pakistan with regard to its development of nuclear weapons, while Pakistan felt it had every right to respond in kind to India's explosion of a nuclear weapon in 1974. America put pressure on Pakistan over nuclear issues but not on India. There is a fear now that America will withdraw once again and leave the region to its own devices.

In the case of the current campaign in Afghanistan, few believe that there was compelling evidence to implicate Usama bin Laden and the Taliban in the September 11 attacks. The Taliban government itself was asking for evidence, along with the Pakistani government. Evidence was not made accessible or talked about in the mass media. Some Pakistani officials went so far as to say that even if Usama bin Laden was not implicated in the events of September 11th; he has been implicated for the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa. Because of the use of excessive force in Afghanistan and the glaring disparity of power, there is a natural tendency to sympathize with the underdog. Some events were especially irritating, such as the bombardment of Mazar-e-Sharif, the treatment of prisoners in Cuba, and the bombardment of civilians and soldiers elsewhere.

Now the concern is about the future of Afghanistan. An interim government should be established for some time and then political institutions should be set up, but the fear is that America will impose its own choices to govern Afghanistan. Will it be an objective, representative government or will it be merely people that America likes? What are the objectives of America in the area? Do Americans seek only to destroy the Taliban, or are they going to go a step further by reconstructing Afghanistan, helping the Afghanis to have a stable, democratic government, ending opium growing, and substituting other cultivated crops? Does America want more than that? Does the United States want to stay in the area for its own economic benefits, or so that it can monitor whatever is happening in Iran? There is some vagueness, perhaps because American policy is not yet finalized. All of these incidents and policies add to the gap between the Muslim world and America.

The government and opposition in my native country of Sudan welcome this intervention by America in trying to solve the conflict. But again, people are looking to see if American involvement will be objective and represent a sincere attempt to solve the problem. To what extent will Americans be neutral in intervening in this conflict, or are they going to yield to pressure groups in America to favor this or that party? To some extent, this will be a testing ground for America and Sudan. This doesn't mean that some of America's foreign policy isn't appreciated. For example, in the Balkans, everyone appreciated U.S. support for the Bosnians. But the negative side is more overwhelming. The opportunity exists for greater understanding and improved working relationships, but suspicion and negative attitudes prevail for the moment.

Another element to consider is the fact that many in the West consider Islam and Muslims to be a threat to the West. Some pronouncements from government officials support the view that the new enemy is Islam. There is no evidence for that. America is looking for an enemy since the Russian bloc collapsed and to fill that need, Islam and Muslims have been elected. It is very surprising that with all of the good relations between America and many Muslim governments, Muslims are considered the new threat or enemy. There is no insurmountable obstruction in the Muslim world to reaching an improved understanding. The current case of Sudan provides an excellent example of how Muslim attitudes toward America can be changed, if America behaves in a neutral way in internal conflicts, in a way that is consistent with its own values.

Appendix B. The 2002 Conference: Concept and Organization

The International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) conceived this joint conference on enhancing stability in South Asia as an initial step toward establishing a new U.S.-Muslim dialogue. ICRD, which is actively involved in track-two diplomacy efforts in Kashmir and the Sudan, played an indispensable role in attracting distinguished representatives from Islamic think tanks and universities in Islamabad and a broad range of thinkers from the Afghan *diaspora*. As an organization committed to faith-based diplomacy, ICRD brought first-hand experience to the task of understanding better the cultural and religious factors that permeate the security considerations of this region. IDA drew on its connections with the defense, diplomatic, policy, and analytical communities to gather a group of U.S. participants who currently work these issues in their official capacities. As a private, nonprofit research institute, IDA also provided a neutral, non-official venue for frank, off-the-record discussions.

ICRD is a Washington, DC,-based organization that facilitates increased understanding and collaboration between policy-makers and diplomats on the one hand, and religious leaders (both clergy and laity) on the other, in resolving differences between peoples, communities, and nation-states. ICRD serves as a bridge between politics and religion in support of peacemaking.

IDA is a Federally Funded Research and Development Center that conducts independent analyses primarily for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the intelligence community.

Participants

The most important contribution to the success of the conference came from the many participants who gave generously of their time and intellect in ensuring that the discussions were thoughtful and productive. Thirty-four people participated in the two-day event: 12 from Pakistan and the Pakistani-Afghan-Kashmiri *Diaspora* in the United States and Canada, 6 from the U.S. government (Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, National Defense University, Defense Science Board, and the Department of State, including the U.S. Agency for International Development), 1 from the World Bank, 3 from ICRD, and 13 from IDA. IDA's facilitation team, under the direction of

Mr. Edward F. Smith, Jr., directed the discussion groups and developed findings. Dr. Douglas M. Johnston, President of the ICRD, chaired the conference, and guided plenary discussions of each group's findings. A complete list of participants is included in Appendix C of this document.

Objectives, Methodology, and Topics

The objectives of this seminar were twofold: (1) to identify and address key issues relating to the stability of South Asia through a series of policy discussion seminars; and (2) to explore the use of facilitated working groups as a tool for effective cross-cultural dialogue between Islam and the West on issues of mutual concern. This conference was structured as a series of facilitated working group discussions on various topics related to regional security in Pakistan and Afghanistan, including:

- ▶ Security and Stability

- ▶ Economic Prosperity

- ▶ Functional Governance

- ▶ Cultural Collaboration

- ▶ Bridging the Disconnects

- ▶ Alternatives for the Future

The substantive objectives of the working groups were to:

- ▶ Explore emerging challenges that face Islam and the West in the twenty-first century, with a particular focus on globalization and the Information Age.

- ▶ Define current and future opportunities for dialogue and substantive progress in a variety of areas and disciplines, focused on enhancing stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan and on building an effective and durable strategic partnership between Pakistan and the United States.

- ▶ Explore means and methods for overcoming impediments to greater cooperation

- ▶ Develop insights.

Beyond this general guidance, however, the individual working groups were free to frame questions and conduct their discussions along whatever lines they found most useful. The discussions were conducted under Chatham House Rules of non-attribution, and IDA facilitators limited their role to moderating the working group sessions. After each session, *rapporteurs* from the individual working groups summarized their discussions at a brief plenary session before moving on to the next topic. The groups reconvened at the close of the second day for an extended discussion on recommendations and alternatives for the future.

Appendix C. Conference Participants

International Center for Religion and Diplomacy
Dr. Douglas M. Johnston (President)

Dr. Abubaker al-Shingieti (Senior Associate)

Mr. Joe Mata (Research Associate)

Institute for Defense Analyses
Dr. Theodore S. Gold (Director, Joint Advanced Warfighting Program (JAWP))

Mr. Michael Leonard (Director, Strategy, Forces and Resources Division (SFRD))

Ambassador Timothy Carney (Consultant)

Dr. Caroline Ziemke (SFRD)

Mr. Robert A. Zirkle (SFRD)

Dr. Katy Oh Hassig (SFRD)

Mr. Larry Sampler (SFRD)

Dr. Robie I. Samanta Roy (System Evaluation Division (SED))

Mr. Edward Smith (Operational Evaluation Division (OED))

Mr. John Kreis (OED)

Mr. Dave Davis (Consultant)

Dr. John Barnett (SED)

Mr. John Hanley (JAWP)

Mr. John Sandrock (Consultant)

Ms. Adrienne Janetti (JAWP)

Mr. John Sandoz (JAWP)

Department of State
Mr. Lawrence K. Robinson (Director, Office of Regional Affairs, Bureau of South Asian Affairs)

Mr. Jim McNaught (Office of PAB, Bureau of South Asian Affairs)

U.S. Agency for International Development
Mr. Dayton Maxwell (Special Advisor to the Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development)

Department of Defense

CAPT Ken Walker, US Navy (Joint Staff, J-5)

Mr. Joe Eash (National Defense University (NDU))

Col Jack Gill (NDU)

Mr. Joe McMillan (NDU)

Dr. Joshua Lederberg (Defense Science Board)

World Bank

Ms. Anne Tully (Afghanistan Country Officer, the World Bank)

Pakistan

Dr. al-Tayib Zein al-Abdin (Professor of International Relations and Head of the Political Science Department, Islamic University, Islamabad)

Dr. Khalid Rahman (Executive Director, Institute for Policy Studies, Islamabad)

Dr. Muhammed Islam (Associate Professor, Area Studies Center, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad)

Afghanistan

Mr. Abdul Hameed Samaidi (Former President, Primary Education Dept., Ministry of Education, Afghanistan)

Mr. Hamid Naweed (Former Public Relations Coordinator and broadcaster for CNN World Report, Afghan Resource Center)

Mr. Assadullah Farhanad (Afghan businessman and scholar; former Professor of Agriculture, University of Kabul)

Mr. Dawoad Nasim (businessman, telecommunications industry)

Kashmir

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai (Executive Director, Kashmiri American Council)

Other

Dr. Asif Shaikh (President, International Resources Group)

Mr. Muhammed Tariqur Rahman (Executive Director, Islamic Circle of North America Relief Organization)

Dr. Zahid Bukhari (Director, Muslims in the American Public Square, Georgetown University Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding)

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This document presents a report of the "Conference on Regional Stability in South Asia: Establishing a Dialogue on the Future of Afghanistan," held at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) on March 6 and 7, 2002. The conference was co-sponsored by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) and IDA. The conference brought together analysts and experts from South Asia and the United States to establish cross-cultural communication on a range of important issues, with a particular emphasis on the reconstruction of post-conflict Afghanistan. At the same time, the participants assessed the usefulness of such facilitated discussions as a mechanism for promoting effective cross-cultural dialogue leading to improved understanding between the United States and the Muslim world.

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